INVITATION / CONCEPT NOTE
Conference on Central Asia co-hosted by Slovak EU Presidency and UNDP
“EU-Central Asia: New Dimensions of Cooperation”
(13 September, Brussels)

Background and Context

Central Asia is an important point of focus for the Slovak Presidency. A discussion on Central Asia took place during the informal EU Political Directors meeting in Bratislava (4-5 July). In addition, the informal FAC Development Council in Brussels (12 September) will concentrate on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The upcoming Conference on Afghanistan (4-5 October) will be also of great relevance for Central Asia because of the proximity and close links with Afghanistan. The Central Asian countries are facing increasing political, economic and security challenges, which can be addressed only through a coordinated response by all the partners working in the region. The SDGs provide an appropriate framework for this cooperation. All Central Asian countries have now taken the necessary steps to localize and contextualise the SDGs agenda.

Participants

The event will involve up to 100 participants representing various actors, including UNDP Country Offices representatives, EU institutions, EU Member States, Central Asia representatives, regional organisations (CAREC, UN RCCA), EIB, EBRD, WB, think tanks, business, media.

Goals and added value

The conference aims to demonstrate the increased strategic interest of the EU and the Slovak Republic in Central Asia and to strengthen our partnership with the region. Implementing the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and achieving the SDGs is a global endeavour and a coordinated response among key partners is essential. Timely discussion on the respective plans to reach the SDGs in Central Asia and sharing of experience will be highly valuable. Results of discussions could feed into the implementation of the discussion at the FAC Development Council in September. The conference will also provide an important opportunity to coordinate our positions in the run-up to the Conference on Afghanistan.
Programme

Opening speeches /10:00-10:45/

1. Lukáš Parízek, State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic
2. Cihan Sultanoğlu, UN Assistant Secretary General and Regional Director for Europe and CIS, UNDP
3. Stefano Manservisi, Director General, DG DEVCO
4. Thomas Mayr-Harting, Managing Director for Europe and Central Asia, EEAS

Panel I with focus on political cooperation, security and relations of Central Asia to Afghanistan /10:45 – 12:00/

1) Marcel Peško, Director of Conflict Prevention Centre, OSCE
2) Michael Siebert, Head of Division for Central Asia, Federal Foreign Office, Germany
3) Erkinkhon Rahmatullozoda, Permanent Representative of Tajikistan to the EU
4) Martijn Pluim, Director, Easter Dimension, ICMPD

Q&As

Moderator: Fatima Ayub, Associate Fellow, ECFR

Coffee Break /12:00 – 12:30/

Panel II with focus on development /12:30 – 14:00/

1) Peter Burian, EUSR for Central Asia, EEAS
2) Zanda Kalniņa-Lukaševica, Parliamentary Secretary responsible for Development, Latvia
3) Jobst von Kirchmann, Head of Unit Development Coordination Central Asia, Middle East/Gulf and Pacific, DG DEVCO
4) Almaz Khamzayev, Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the EU
5) Matt Reed, CEO of Aga Khan Foundation

Q&As

Moderator: Norimasa Shimomura, UNDP Resident Representative to Kazakhstan

Lunch /14:00 – 15:00/

Logistics

Registration will start at 9:30 AM. The conference will end at 15:00 PM. Venue: Permanent Representation of the Slovak Republic to the EU (Avenue de Cortenbergh 107, Brussels).